



Top 5 Rock Albums of All Time, A Conversation with Professor Glenn Gass

Video Transcript

<https://vimeo.com/213510632>

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass displaying Booker T & The MG's album cover; moves to a bookcase filled with albums and pulls a Beatles album cover]

Glenn Gass: I don't think you can understand any period of time without understanding its art. I think historically it's essential and hopefully, personally it's essential.

[Video: The words "IU" on crimson banner left]

[Video: The word "DAY" on red banner right]

[Video: Two banners come together to form the IU DAY banner]

[Words appear and encircle top and bottom of IU Day banner: ALL IU. ALL DAY.]

[Words appear on black film strip with IU DAY banner at top: TOP 5 ROCK ALBUMS OF ALL TIME, A Conversation with Professor Glenn Gass]

[Video: Glenn Gass sitting in a chair behind his desk in his office with colorful psychedelic posters on the wall behind him]

[Words appear: Glenn Gass, Provost Professor, Jacobs School of Music]

Glenn Gass continues: I always cringe at these lists of greatest singers of all time, greatest albums of all time, but they're fun. Who doesn't like to make their own list as long as you don't feel like you're speaking for anybody else.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays The Beatles Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club album]

[Words Appear: #1 Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band, The Beatles]

Glenn Gass continues: But since this is 2017, it is the 50th anniversary, I just happen to have my original mono copy of Sgt. Pepper, very proud of this. You know whenever they do those lists, it's like okay Sgt. Pepper and then what? It's like greatest guitarists of all time, okay, after Jimi Hendrix now we can start fighting.

It doesn't mean it's the best album of all time. All Beatle aficionados would say this is not their best album, but everyone would agree it's the most important album because this changed the way that everybody thought about rock records. It was the songs blurred together, and when they didn't there was a microsecond of silence between them. It was like one curtain closes and this

other curtain opening, talking this fantastic trip through Indian ragas and Benny Goodman clarinets, and strings, and harps, and Avant-Garde, A Day in the Life, swirls, just every kind of music can imagine seemed to be on here. Lucy in the Sky, Through the Looking Glass, just fabulous.

In rock and roll there's only three songs that have a hard rock guitar. It's almost like rock and roll has become by this point one of the styles that they can choose to use. They still transcended being a rock band. We are rock band, therefore we play two guitars, bass, and drums. No, we don't. We have orchestras, we have whatever we want. They were thinking more like composers.

[Video: Glenn Gass points to the cover of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club album]

Glenn Gass continues: Even the album cover can be a work of art. Why should the album cover just be a picture of us waving? Let's make it a work of art. A pastiche of all these people that we admire. All the members of the Sergeant Peppers Band who helped lonely hearts like us get through life. Composers.

[Video: Glenn Gass opens cover of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club album and displays the photo of the four Beatles]

Glenn Gass continues: Why not open up? It's not a double album but they were the Beatles. You want to spend a few extra million, you'll do it.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays the back of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club album]

Glenn Gass continues: The lyrics might even be important enough to have on the back cover for the first time. If just felt big. This is the first album they made after they quit touring, and they were very conscious that they better come up ... If we're going to say we're not going to tour anymore, we're just going to concentrate on music in the studio we better come up with something big.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays Beach Boys Pet Sounds CD]

Glenn Gass continues: My son stole my Pet Sounds my mono Pet Sounds. He's not getting this.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays The Beatles Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club album]

Glenn Gass continues: They're going to pry my mono Beatles out of my cold, dead fingers.

[Video: Glenn Gass picks up Beach Boys Pet Sounds CD and examines it]

Glenn Gass continues: They took my Pet Sounds. I love that they wanted it.

[Words appear: #2 Pet Sounds, The Beach Boys]

Glenn Gass continues: Pet Sounds by the Beach Boys is always the number two pick for most important album of all time. One, because it directly inspired Sgt. Peppers. The Beatles heard this

album and went, "Oh my God." This is better than Revolver, this is better than anything we've done. "We've got to somehow top this." That is what set the bar for Sgt. Peppers. That's what's so great about the 60's. Rubber Soul set the bar for this.

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: Brian Wilson heard it and went, "Oh my God, Rubber Soul is amazing. I got to top that." Everybody is listening to everybody else and trying to outdo each other.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: The Beatles heard this album with this incredible orchestrated pop music. With not just violins, they'd used that in Yesterday, and not just French horns, but mixed with sleigh bells and bass harmonicas, and accordions, it just was insane juxtaposition of instruments.

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: Brian Wilson was in the studio like a composer just creating this incredible sound.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: And then these especially gorgeous songs. Wouldn't it be nice if we were older and we didn't have to wait so long? Wouldn't it be nice to live together in the kind of world where we belong? God Only Knows, open sides to John and Paul both said it was the best song written by anyone. Just high praise.

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: It's that song that Julianne, my wife and I, had played during our wedding service.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: I wanted a Beatles song so badly but in the end if you want to say I love you God Only Knows is the only way to go. I may not always love you, but as long as there are stars above you you never need to doubt it. I'll make you so sure about it. God only knows what I'd be without you. Of course to the sublime climbing melody.

Then the album ends with, Caroline, No, where did your long hair go? Where is the girl I used to know, how could you lose that happy glow? You said you'd never change, but that's not true. It's like this beautiful song cycle about innocence, wouldn't it be nice, that opens it then this disillusion at the end. I think everybody needs to go through their Pet Sounds period where it's the essential album of their lives and they just live with it. Any time you go through a loss of innocence, or a change in your life it still drives me to tears. When I first discovered it I couldn't believe there's music that said what I was feeling so strongly and so clearly.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays The Beatles Revolver album cover]

Glenn Gass continues: My favorite Beatle album, see there's two different things. The most important, but everyone, like I say would probably say, "Yeah, but the best is Revolver, or Rubber Soul, or Abbey Road." You can't, really, there's no wrong answer.

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass talking]

[Words appear: #3 Revolver, The Beatles]

Glenn Gass continues: This is an album you can pick songs out and say I want to hear Here, There, and Everywhere. I want to hear Eleanor Rigby, I want to hear Tomorrow Never Knows.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: The parts are amazing.

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: And they add up to this whole just by being so kaleidoscopic that by the time you're done with this album you're like, Jesus, what was that?

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: This is '66. This is when they're still getting ready to go on their next tour and they had to just hurry up and write songs and get the album out.

It wasn't self-conscious the way Sgt. Pepper was. We're making a great work of art that has to be our statement because this is big, we're not touring. This is just we're still going to go out and play baseball stadiums for screaming girls in a few weeks. Got to get the album done. They're at such a fever pitch of creation that they were just writing these masterpieces without really thinking about it. Or overthinking it, just doing it. George Martin, and all the Beatles we're just trying everything they could in the studio. The tape loops in Tomorrow Never Knows, and the string quartet in Eleanor Rigby, and everything. John and Paul were at the peak of their games writing songs, but very different from each other.

[Video: Black and white close-up image of Glenn Gass talking and gesturing with his hands]

Glenn Gass continues: John doing these swirling guitar drenched she said, she said kind of things, and And Your Bird Can Sing.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: Paul doing For No One, and Eleanor Rigby is kind of this classical period, and they complement each other so beautifully. The ambition of this album is just sky high. This gets my nod for favorite album.

My son stole my double album Blonde on Blonde also, but '66, God, what a year.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays Bob Dylan Blonde on Blonde CD]

[Video: Glenn Gass opens Blonde on Blonde CD cover, displaying the inside panels]

[Video: Black and white image of inside panels of Blonde on Blonde CD cover]

[Words appear: #4 Blonde on Blonde, Bob Dylan]

Glenn Gass continues: '66, Dylan, Blonde on Blonde, geez. Incredible masterpiece.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: You can't believe the human mind can create songs like this. It just keeps going. Sad Eyed Lady, The Lowlands, Visions of Johanna, Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again, you know. The rag man draws circles up and down the block. I'd ask him what the matter was but I know that he don't talk. The ladies treatment kindly then they furnish me with tape. Deep inside my heart I know I can't escape. Oh Momma, can't this really be the end? To be stuck inside of Mobile with the Memphis blues again. The cracked bells and washed out

horns blow into my face with scorn but it's not that way. I wasn't born to lose you, I want you.

How does the human mind come up with something like that? The imagery is so cracked, and fractured, and these horns talking to you.

[Video: Black and white image of Glenn Gass' fingers interlaced]

Glenn Gass continues: And then the rhymes are so wonderful too. The words are just spilling all over each other and you just get lost in the sheer sound of the words.

[Video: Returns to color image. Glenn Gass picks up and forcibly drops CD on the desk to show emphasis]

Glenn Gass continues: Dammit, he deserved that Nobel Prize. He got the Nobel Prize in literature. Who would think a rock singer? You don't pick up a guitar and say I'm going to win a Nobel Prize someday. There's no body of work on the planet that can rival his.

[Video: Glenn Gass displays Rolling Stones Beggars Banquet album cover, opening and closing the cover]

[Video: Goes to black and white image.]

[Words appear: #5 Beggars Banquet, Rolling Stones]

Glenn Gass continues: We're having five, this makes five. You'll notice they're all within two year, but to come out of '67, Rolling Stones, Beggars Banquet is ...

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: Sgt. Pepper was a masterpiece.

[Video: Black and white close-up image of Glenn Gass talking and gesturing with his hands]

Glenn Gass continues: It's like the Sistine Chapel. You go in there, you go whoa, it's like untouched by human hands.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: You can't believe human hands created this. You walk out of there, if you're an artist, going, now what? What am I going to do? What's anyone going ... Even The Beatles came to think that. How do we follow Sgt. Pepper? Start writing orchestra music for 50 people to hear, what do we do? The Stones helped everybody find their way back.

They came barreling out with Jumping Jack Flash, the single that proceeded this album and said rock and roll has some life left in it. Keith comes barreling out with his riff, and Jagger barreling out with those lyrics,

[Video: Black and white close-up image of Glenn Gass talking and gesturing with his hands]

Glenn Gass continues: and Charlie Watts, Bill Wyman, that great swinging rhythm section. You can always dance to a Rolling Stones rock son.

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: Most, I can't dance that long with Paperback Writer, I'm sorry. A lot of Beatles songs are not dance tunes. But the Stones, you put on even their heaviest songs Brown Sugar, Jumping Jack Flash, Get Off Of My Cloud, it's great dance music. Try it at a party, people will dance.

They did with this album what they were always good at. They were mining America. They were rediscovering country music, they were rediscovering blues, bringing it back to the rock and roll, but not trying to sound ancient. Trying to sound like 1968. Here's a way out of the cul-de-sac that Sgt. Pepper seemed to be. It kicked off their great career. The Stones Beggars Banquet, Let It Bleed, Sticky Fingers, Exile on Main Street, when The Beatles were breaking up The Stones deserved the title they got, which is the world's greatest rock and roll band. They kept everybody honest. You hear the last single you better rock. You better remember what you're here for.

[Video: Black and white close-up image of Glenn Gass talking and creating a sphere with his hands and arms]

Glenn Gass continues: I don't know. I just think between The Beatles, The Stones, Dylan, and The Beach Boys you have this sort of sphere that that just keeps rolling,

[Video: Returns to color image of Glenn Gass talking]

Glenn Gass continues: but always rolling uphill. It was fabulous, just fabulous.

[Words appear on black film strip with IU DAY banner at top: TOP 5 ROCK ALBUMS OF ALL TIME, A Conversation with Professor Glenn Gass

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